DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 093 386 IR 000 894

AUTHOR	McBride, Jack
TITLE	The Market Need for Off-Campus Cable-Based Higher Education.
INSTITUTION	Nebraska Univ., Lincoln. State Univ. of Nebraska.
PUB DATE	Jan 74
NOTE	7p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Cable Television and the University (Dallas, Texas, January 29-31, 1974)
AVAILABLE FROM	Proceedings of the Conference on Cable Television, EDUCOM, P. O. Box 364, Princeton, New Jersey 08540 ($6.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Alternative Schools; *Cable Television; Delivery Systems; Educational Television; *External Degree Programs; *Higher Education; *Instructional Media; *Marketing; Open Education; Technology
IDENTIFIERS	State University of Nebraska; SUN

ABSTRACT

A study was made of the market need for cable television-based higher education from an off-campus and non-traditional point of view. State University of Nebraska (SUN) is such an endeavor. Reduced to its essence, SUN is three things: (1) an extensive investigation into non-traditional education; (2) a new exportable model for systematized design and validation of college-level courseware of superior quality; and (3) a new model delivery system for American higher education. An analysis of census data and three corroborating market surveys identified a target audience. The findings indicate there is an important and substantial educational need to be serviced. When added to the need for convenience, the capacity and the versatility inherent in cable television, the potential relationship between the university and the cable television industry becomes considerable. (WCM)

ED 093386

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The Market Need for Off-Campus Cable-Based Higher Education

by Jack McBride

My task in this paper is to address the subject of the market need for cable television-based higher education—from an off-campus point of view and from the special perspective of that which is currently being termed non-traditional study or open learning. Before specifically addressing the market need for this newly evolving educational service, let me first set the stage both in terms of the rapidly developing new service and of a particular project and educational program.

Motivated by the Newman Report and the report of the Carnegie Commission on Non-Traditional Study; spurred on by initial successes of the British Open University; urged further by a currently proclaimed need for accountability, for increased productivity in higher education, for the call to teach more, better, faster and more conveniently; and abetted by a society with a variety of motivations virtually demanding continuing adult education, post-secondary education in this country and abroad is devoting increasing attention to the subject of open learning—to the employment of the latest educational technologies in new and improved manners to make formal education more readily accessable to new audiences conveniently in their homes.

Continuing education beyond the degree is far from new in this country. Colleges and universities have for years provided a variety of

IR 000 894

traditional adult and continuing education, correspondence study, and general extension programs. For the most part, these have been conservative, generally successful and limited in the creative use of the available technologies. But with the above-mentioned thrusts, there is rapidly increasing and new-found interest in systemtically employing multiple media to deliver formal education effectively and conveniently off-campus to the student in his own setting and at his own pace. A national open-learning poll we conducted a year ago indicated that over half of the 1,455 U.S. colleges and universities contacted had either non-traditional open learning programs in existence or on the drawing board, and the vast majority of the remaining institutions were appointing study groups to investigate their entry into the field.

A BROAD SPECTRUM OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDY

By this time, there is a rather broad spectrum of such nontraditional study. It ranges all the way from the use of existing British Open University courses at Rutgers, the University of Maryland, and the University of Houston; to Adelphi College, which combines correspondence study with special use of commuter trains as their delivery system; to San Diego State University, which employs lessons in newspapers as their open-learning delivery mechanism; to a program in Denver which turns neighborhood libraries into open-learning-study centers; to the new Empire State College in New York State; to various consortia developing University Without Walls and Second Chance University programs. The survey indicates that the vast majority employ the media—most particularly, television. Open learning is clearly one of the hottest topics in higher education at this point in time. It gives every indication of continuing so for a number of years. And with technological advances such as in the cable television field, interest in and opportunities for open learning can only be heightened.

The S-U-N project is possibly one of the more significant such open-learning endeavors. Reduced to its essence, S-U-N is three things: First, it is, we believe, the nation's most extensive investigation into opening learning and non-traditional education. Secondly, it is a new exportable model for the systematized design and validation of college-level courseware of superior quality. Third, it is a new model delivery system for American higher education.

With over $880,000 in grants from the U.S. Office of Education, the National Center for Educational Technology and now the National Institute of Education, S-U-N -which is an acronym for State University of Nebraska- has had the funding to assemble the professional staff and devote the time these past 34 months to investigate systematically the subject of nontraditional study and open learning for the adult. As

indicated, colleges and universities throughout the United States were surveyed. Existing and planned open-learning projects in this country and abroad were visited and studied. We have assembled in Lincoln a vast resource library for constant reference by our course development teams.

In addition, extensive surveys were made of the proposed S-U-N clientele. Keep in mind that the target audience for this open-learning project is not the student on an existing college campus. It is rather the adult–from high school senior through senior citizen–who for whatever reason either will not or cannot receive college instruction in the traditional manner. But, before I summarize the findings of our audience surveys, let me complete the description of the S-U-N so that the context for discussion is clearly established.

A NEW DESIGN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

S-U-N is a new design for higher education programming. This is the very subject of a concurrent panel, so my comments to this point must be severely restricted. Over the past two and one-half years, we have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to address in depth the design of open learning courseware in a new manner. We have assembled special 18 member course development teams which bring together on a full-time basis content experts, instructional designers, testing specialists, educational psychologists, professional media producers, writers, directors, cinematographers and the necessary graphic, print, audio and video support personnel. We have developed an elaborate and interwoven twenty-step instructional design process wherein the team, starting with pre-stated course and lesson instructional objectives, assigns specific instructional roles and responsibilities to television, audio and print, designs and produces the instruction, field tests it in a manner similar to the formative evaluation procedures so successfully employed by the Children's Television Workshop, and then proceeds to redesign and reproduce the courseware materials, ending with validated lessons ready for delivery.

In addition to the new higher education courseware design, S-U-N has developed a new open-learning delivery mechanism which employs some Open University elements and adds others. Depending upon local resources available, open learning systems can employ a wide variety of delivery elements. S-U-N has chosen to employ courseware comprised of six elements, or modules as we call them: television–either via broadcast, cable or cassette, audio cassettes, textual materials, syllabi, the newspaper, and instructional kits–together with regional resource centers, correspondence, inward twenty-four-hour WATS lines, and a several day residential requirement upon completion of the course. In the interest of time, I have severely consensed an elaborate and exciting plan which,

according to a variety of federal and foundation subsidizers and evaluators, has the potential to emerge as a major designer and developer for this country of academically substantive and professionally mediated nontraditional open learning college courseware.

But even with such a brief description, it is obvious that engaging successfully in the area of open learning and providing effective instruction can be both a complicated and costly endeavor. Before making a series of important educational curricular, administrative and fiscal decisions, educational institutions must know a great deal about their potential audience. And this brings us right back to our panel topic.

What is the audience potential for open learning? It is sufficient to warrant the considerable commitment required to implement such an educational program? And if enough people are interested, what are their unique interests, needs and abilities? S-U-N was obliged to study these questions in depth. We have by this time generated an elaborate set of statistics dealing with the subject.

Available data can provide only a rough index of the potential clientele for an open-learning system, but such data offer certain maximum parameters. Professor Cyril Houle of the University of Chicago has identified three major clientele sources for external degree programs: high school dropouts—18 million nationwide in 1971 and projected to 20 million in 1990; those with high school diplomas and no college—38 million in 1971 and projected to 58 million in 1990; and those with some college—11 million in 1971 and projected to 22 million in 1990.

These groups are substantial: they will continue to grow.

We have studied these national data in terms of their counterparts in Nebraska and the surrounding region. The Nebraska statistics corroborate that the 21 to 34 age group has the highest participation rate in current adult education programs. Further, the information confirms that the 31 to 52 age group has high potential interest in continuing education. Currently active high school students are another potential source.

In addition to examination of census data, in order to investigate the number of potential enrollees S-U-N has conducted three detailed and independent market studies these past months. They, too, yielded significant information.

A statewide market survey was undertaken in Nebraska by our own staff, using mail questionnaires, telephone calls and personal interviews. Although a number of questions were posed, the survey was designed to focus most specifically upon two: How many people are interested enough in the S-U-N concept to be considered potential students? And what are potential students like?

A second market survey was commissioned to a New York City firm which tested in a number of midwestern states, as well as selected cities elsewhere in the country. Mail questionnaires and a variety of

sophisticated marketing techniques were employed by this professional surveyor. The third study, regional in nature, was undertaken by a professional research company which, in this case, employed the personal interview technique.

From the considerable data assembled, we have learned much about the target audience. The three market surveys corroborate one another. After going through a sophisticated analysis and sifting process which eliminates respondents with only general or varying degrees of interest in such education, the market analyses finally arrived at a figure of 2% of the total adult population sufficiently interested in college credit courses to be willing to use $50 of their hard-earned income for tuition. Let me quantify that for you. Two percent of Nebraska's population would increase existing college enrollments within the state by one-third.

Now, we are not so naive as to automatically regard this as fact. In our long-range fiscal projections, we have therefore halved that figure, then halved it again. The moment of truth will come when courses are actually offered, enrollment solicited and tuition bills paid.

In order to design effective instruction for our target audience, we were obliged to learn a great deal about the age, the educational background, and the ethnic groupings of that audience, its occupational background, its income, its family circumstances, its attitudes and goals, its current activities and interests. In so doing, we identified 15 sub-target population groups and developed elaborate profiles on each. They range, as you might guess, from the high school senior who is eager to get a head start into college or has taken all the subjects his small school curriculum offers to the senior citizen interested not necessarily in credit, but rather in broadening his horizons. In between, there are middle-aged males desiring a career change, middle-aged females seeking enrichment and a college degree, young marrieds desiring to recoup missed educational opportunities, older adults seeking enrichment, physically handicapped persons prevented from attending college in the traditional manner, early retireds thinking of new horizons, students in special training programs such as nurses and technicians, minority and low income persons, college dropouts, job-bound persons, rural and physically isolated persons, and adults seeking personal enrichment.

As I say, we have developed rather detailed profiles on each of these target groups. With additional research currently being completed, we will also soon have available personality profiles on the open learning clientele.

So, as you see, by the time audience projections are drawn there is a significant new population interested in and available for open learning—providing it is academically sound, professionally mediated—which means making it interesting, even entertaining—and conveniently provided.

THE INTEREST IN ADULT EDUCATION

While most of our audience research efforts have focused upon this two percent of the gross population specifically interested in college courses for credit, our work these past months has revealed a much broader adult audience interested in general education. Surveys show 15 to 20 percent of the gross population interested in some form of continuing or basic education. These findings parallel those reported by a California study in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*[1] and other studies which report one adult in eight now attending some sort of adult education class. This underlines the fact that large numbers of adults are interested in further learning, though they may not necessarily be interested in returning to a formal campus setting.

Clearly, there is an important and substantial educational need to be serviced. When you add to that need the convenience, the capacity and the versatility as inherent in cable television, the potential relationship between the university and the cable television industry become considerable. From the point of view of one post-secondary administrator, I do not see cable television and broadcast television as being necessarily competitive, at least as they relate to higher education. In some ways, they offer parallel services; in some, unique. Obviously, cable offers a far greater quantity of potential service to higher education. Perhaps my views are biased because of the approach we are taking with S-U-N, but we see higher education working extensively with both the broadcast and cable technologies to strive to accomplish this important educational objective.

I mentioned earlier the six modules which comprise the S-U-N open-learning course. Television is a most important one of those. The S-U-N television module is designed for use either by a broadcast station, such as local public television outlet, or for distribution via a cable company. We anticipate that both will be extensively employed and are developing marketing and distribution facilities accordingly.

And this leads to several other concerns. The first deals with courseware. Our study shows that at present very little such programming is currently available–post secondary instructional programming which is academically sound, of sufficient technical quality, and which employs the medium of television in such professional manner as to merit the sustained attention of the intended audience. A professional education television program requires both talented staff, time, expensive facilities, and considerable production budget. The target audience–particularly the one under consideration, the adult in his home–consciously or unconsciously compares the educational television program to its professional commercial counterpart. With the many demands upon the time of this nontraditional adult learner as today's society imposes, only those programs which are creatively conceived and imaginatively produced will

motivate his continued attention. And only in this deliberate and disciplined and systematized manner can educational objectives be met. For there is no real shortcut to learning. The S-U-N plan calls for distinguished academic talents of national repute to join with professional media specialists from both coasts in developing the new courseware.

THE S-U-N PLAN

Because of both complexity and cost, it may well be that the number of courseware producers will be smaller rather than larger. If so, the quality programming must be made available on the widest possible basis for the least cost. This is the plan of S-U-N. We intend to insure that the courses currently under development and their successors, will be readily available, to *any* educational institution that wishes to employ them. Mediocre materials as produced by over-enthusiastic but well-meaning educators, or entrepreneurs overselling because of false motivations, could so damage the legitimate open-learning potential as to render it ineffective before its fullest service can be realized.

In some circles, the temptation will be to provide watered-down or sugar-coated productions in the interest of expediency. Unless the television and open learning courseware is academically sound and educationally above reproach, more harm than good will again be done. Another major temptation will be that of failure to employ the television medium properly. Instead, the instruction of the classroom will simply be transferred to the television studio where for 30 minutes the talking professorial countenance spews forth knowledge. The result: a dull program which will turn the target audience away in droves.

Though the problems of open learning via cable are numerous and the pitfalls many, the need is ever-present and will increase. There is abundant evidence. The technologies stand readily available to the educator. With their proper employment, the education industry can join with the cable television industry in a legitimate productive and mutually satisfying endeavor to the lasting credit of both.

REFERENCE

1. Chronicle of Higher Education. Vol. VII, No. 18, Feb. 5, 1973, Washington, D.C.: Jacobson, Robert L., "Colleges are not Meeting Needs of Adults, Panel on Non-Traditional Study Finds."